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Manuel Estrada Cabrera's Place In History

By

EDWARD H. WELCH

San Francisco, California
February 8, 1916.

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By transfer
The White House.

MANUEL ESTRADA CABRERA

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GUATEMALA

Manuel Estrada Cabrera's Place in History

WITH entire independence of judgment and without any bias whatever on account of nationality or interest in Latin-American politics, nor with any regard to pecuniary gain, but actuated solely by a deep sense of justice, we undertake to publish this pamphlet with the assurance to our readers that every statement contained in its pages is made in conformity with the truth.

Having traveled through the Republic of Guatemala from one end to the other, we have studied carefully and with an open mind the social and economic conditions and customs of the people, and are able impartially to refer to her past, describe the present and give a glimpse of her bright future.

Guatemala's geographical position is splendid; situated between the Pacific and the Atlantic her abundant rivers irrigate the fertile lands which, under the influence of salubrious climates—temperate in the Central and Northern territory and tropical in the South and along the coasts—are admirably adapted for the cultivation of the products of every zone of the world.

Rich in minerals of gold and silver, and until the present almost unexploited, her mines need only adequate development to extract those precious metals and bless the land with abundant wealth.

This beautiful region of the American continent, gifted by nature with exceptional advantages, is inhabited by an honest and intelligent population, which receives the worthy and enterprising stranger without discrimination as to race, nationality or religious creed.

The history of Guatemala until 1898, may be briefly summarized thus: discovered by Spain in the beginning of the Sixteenth Century and like all the other countries conquered by those adventurers, converted to the fanatical religious creed which predominated in the Middle Ages, her soil became the theatre of horrible and bloody deeds which gave the absolute dominion over the lands to those audacious warriors, who sub-

jected the poor Indians—the real and lawful owners—to poverty and the exactions of brutal force which served as the only and supreme law of the land.

The events of the colonization period are well known without going into details: the same system that governed Mexico was adopted in its inexorable form in Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Santa Domingo and the five portions of Central America which then constituted the Viceroyship of Guatemala.

The Spanish domination lasted three hundred long years and ended in 1821, when the most notable citizens, faithfully interpreting the public opinion and in conjunction with the authorities, proclaimed on the 15th of September the liberty and independence of these countries.

The domination over these countries by Augustin Iturbide, founder of the Mexican Empire, lasted only a brief period, and when it ceased they formed a Federation; but, unfortunately, this union was of short duration, as they soon separated into five republics, known geographically as the Central American States.

Guatemala, like the rest of the countries of Latin origin, inherited the vices and the defects of the Mother Country, whence we soon discover that since its emancipation the political system adopted by its people was of the same character as that followed by the old dominant regime—that is, an absolute government supported by bayonets to maintain and perpetuate privileged coteries and the aristocratic class which exploited the natives and forced them to labor like serfs; and this infamous method of governing a people, which had just emerged from the colonial yoke, was called Conservatism; that party exercised its dismal influence until 1871, when the Liberal Party sprang triumphantly into being and inaugurated the Revolution which has brought a new era of liberty, progress and civilization.

The contest between the two political parties became then intense; the advanced element struggled to establish the desired reforms, while the retrograde faction, though already defeated, still maintained its resistance supported by the fanatical grip of old traditions which would maintain the laws of semi-feudalism, the franchises, the influence of prominent families, and the prerogatives of church and clergy; the latter was rich in worldly possessions and owned the people's conscience through their ignorance and superstition.

But resolutely following out its purposes, the Liberal Party was victorious and slowly began the great task of popular edu-

cation; in this way the country entered the great path of progress under the leadership of men of energy and convictions who have placed Guatemala alongside the great nations of modern time.

In 1885 died the illustrious chief of the Liberal Party (Justo Rufino Barrios), a victim of his ideals, in heroic and memorable combat, a martyr to the great idea of uniting the five republics and establishing a strong nationality—the dream of all good citizens of Central America.

Though the noble idea failed, the Liberal Party continued in power, although not always faithful to its principles, due to the weak and vacillating character of the new chief executive who, after the expiration of his term in March, 1892, turned over the affairs of government to his successor—and this man had the good judgment to appoint, as the Secretary of the Interior and Justice, the great man who since has filled the pages of history of his country with many brilliant deeds.

Although very young when appointed to such office, his biography up to that time was meritorious and gives an insight of his character, his services and his talents.

Manuel Estrada Cabrera was born in the City of Quezaltenango on the 21st of November, 1857. During the early years he was under the care of his loving mother, who bred into the child the character which afterwards grew and produced such excellent results and of whose integrity and energy we have such abundant proof during his long and memorable public career.

From the very beginning of life appear the promising signs of his future; indeed, but few examples of eminent men are known that show at such an early age a development of mental power equal to that of the illustrious personage whose biography we herein briefly describe.

His predilection for the profession of law induced him to begin very young, without any help from relatives or wealthy friends, to study jurisprudence; meantime, he worked to support his mother and himself, encouraged by the noble ambition that some day he would be able to realize his aim—to support his good mother during her remaining years and to devote his talents and knowledge to the welfare and advancement of his country.

After many years of sacrifices and hard study he succeeded in obtaining his diploma as attorney-at-law, whereupon he commenced to exercise this profession which was to lead him to the highest honors and merited distinction.

It would be too long a task to enumerate the many cases in which the young jurist distinguished himself. Suffice that we copy the following paragraphs written by one of his admirers:

"Exercising his profession in the city of his birth, he became famed as intelligent, honest and charitable.

"His intelligence was so great that he was held to be the most learned in the knowledge of law; the ablest person to interpret and cite the law before the judges and the courts in the defense of his numerous clients.

"Honest, because he would take charge of a case, not for the sake of profit as generally happens, but moved by a sense of justice, which led him on to victory on all occasions by means of his wisdom in argumentation and his eloquence in speaking.

"Charitable, as he showed when helping the destitute, defending them and paying out of his own pocket the expenses of the trial; his only object being that the rich and powerful should never deprive a poor man of what legally belonged to him."

His integrity was well known and because of the confidence all had in his uprightness, he won the appointment as Superior Judge of Retalhuleu, which office he was obliged to accept—to the great loss of his private business and his numerous clientele.

Only for a short time did he perform his duties at this post, as the government found it advisable to transfer him to the same position in the City of Quezaltenango, which office he filled with such great satisfaction, that the people gave him the proud title of the Champion Defender of Justice. One year afterwards, at a general election, his fellow citizens made him Mayor of the city, at a time when disorder reigned everywhere, due to the hard struggles of local political parties.

Says one of his biographers: "This was indeed a post of honor, though difficult and troublesome; it burdened him with the gravest duties and responsibilities, which he assumed and fulfilled with dignity, satisfaction and such success that, in recognition of his eminent services, he obtained by unanimous vote at the general election, a seat in the National Legislative Assembly for his own Department."

He was always known as a loving son and a diligent student; as a learned jurist and a just and upright judge; as a good patriot and an unselfish citizen. Hitherto, his great qualities had received recognition in only a few departments, but now we see him placed before the eyes of the entire nation as the representative of one of the richest and most important Departments of the Republic.

It was precisely at this time that the public life of this exceptional man began; it was then that judicious and patriotic citizens could foresee the bright future of the young orator, who in eloquent speeches displayed the extent of his political and economic knowledge.

While from his parliamentary seat he advocated the inalienable rights of the people against misuse and usurpation of power, which everywhere is found more or less tyrannical and lawless; he also, when finding it necessary, expressed vigorously his opinions in the press for the purpose of enlightening the proletarian masses regarding the principles of democracy and teaching them their duties and their rights as good citizens.

High, indeed, stands the noble character of this eminent statesman, who, without the aid, protection or influence from any source, but solely through his knowledge and talents, ascended to the first place among the many distinguished public men of the Liberal Party, to which he owes allegiance and which represents the genuine interests and aspirations of the Guatemalan People.

Such a personality naturally brought to the new government, presided over by General José María Reina Barrios, valuable assistance and prestige acquired through long and distinguished services, and this was the high political consideration which induced that government to appoint him Minister of the Interior and Justice.

It would take many pages if we were to state in detail the many measures that through his initiative and indefatigable labor were executed for the betterment of public affairs, which until then, in all branches, had been more or less neglected.

As a matter of course he devoted special attention to the reformation of all departments that came under his immediate supervision and for six years these departments were greatly benefited through his direction and assiduous labor.

As a jurisconsult of superior ability his decisions bore ample fruit and resulted in greatly improving the judicial administration and placing it on an equality with those to be found in the most civilized countries of the world.

One of his first achievements, which reveals his expertness as a jurist, was the compilation of the civil and penal laws in code form, which was accomplished in such a systematic manner as to obviate the trouble and difficulty that obtained before when those wishing to apply or consult them had to resort to newspapers and other scattered publications.

Although it would take much space, as we said before, to enumerate the improvements that Guatemala derived from the endeavors of the Secretary of the Interior and Justice during the six years that Manuel Estrada Cabrera held office, we believe it our duty to mention some of the most important.

It is highly commendable to note the interest he took in reorganizing the General Hospital which was in great need of such attention and which through his care became thoroughly equipped and put under regulations similar to those maintained in Europe and the United States for the benefit of the poor class.

While in the Capital City the homeless sick and those deprived of means of subsistence received due attention and care, many reforms were also, through his generous initiative, introduced in all other hospitals of the Republic, and many charitable institutions were established in all the principal centers and towns that were in need of them.

In looking after the welfare of the little ones—which are so dear to him—he has always shown his solicitude for poor and neglected children who are most entitled to the consideration of noble souls. He has personally prescribed new rules governing children in the Orphan Asylum, providing better care and attention, improving the food and bettering their conditions, also appointing especially selected and competent teachers for their education.

The conditions in the prisons and penitentiaries were deplorable, as according to the barbarous custom of olden times criminals were considered deserving only of harsh and cruel punishment. This clement legislator abolished the penalties of which those unfortunates were the victims, bettered their food and other living conditions, and also inaugurated classes to teach trades and occupations to enable them to earn an honest living when set free and restored to ordinary life in the community.

The population of the City of Guatemala, which has increased in later years, was greatly in need of a new water supply. Consequently, its complaint against the government of the municipality for negligence was justified, as it had failed to provide this necessity and exposed the health and welfare of the people to grave danger. Manuel Estrada Cabrera, overcoming all difficulties, at once took steps to buy the landed property "Aceituno", in order to utilize the river Acatán and construct substantial aqueducts, by means of which the city was abundantly provided with all the water needed for consumption by the people.

In narrating historical events we are compelled to lay aside all other considerations and must be confined strictly to the truth, even if in so doing we should hurt the sensibilities of some who are still living or for whom we entertain the best feelings of respect and esteem.

Moreover, disregarding all scrupulous feelings, it is our solemn duty to state the bare facts without any concealment or consideration of those guilty of doing wrong to their country, even though they may no longer be living. For while we may respect their memory, we must discharge our full duty as impartial and reliable historians.

The last acts of the administration of Reina Barrios were full of errors and the country felt the effects to a marked degree. Hence arose the misunderstanding between the President and his adviser, the Secretary of the Interior. The suggestions offered by the latter were not accepted and as a consequence the blunders occurred which he had foreseen and which he had sought to prevent.

There was no other alternative for the profound statesman than to tender his resignation as member of the cabinet, which he did, and his resignation was accepted; he was then appointed Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the government of Costa Rica, in which country, during his short stay, he discharged the trust confided to his care successfully and won the respect and esteem of all classes.

In the meantime, we must confess, the mistakes and blunders committed in Guatemala were on the increase. Great dissatisfaction was felt everywhere, and as the sad result a revolution broke out, which the government suppressed only after making many sacrifices.

To make the unfortunate situation worse an economic depression began which assumed great proportions. The government considered it necessary to raise a nominal loan; the schools were closed, the National Treasury was suppressed and all public works suspended operation. Indeed, we must acknowledge with deepest sorrow: the country was in a terrible crisis, bankrupt and on the brink of an abyss.

Reina Barrios, though a patriot of good intentions, but of mediocre intelligence, needed the advice and directing force of the powerful mind that had been his right arm and guide during the memorable and best years of his administration; and left to the mercy of men without ability, tact or experience, he was like a ship without a compass and on the verge of shipwreck. His proposal to prolong the presidential term for four more years

has been characterized by some as arbitrary, by others as foolish, but most critics are of the opinion it would inconvenience the country and be detrimental to the good name of the government.

To put the preconceived plan into effect, its authors exercised all their influence, almost coerced the members of the National Legislative Assembly, without due consideration, to vote for extension of the governmental term to four years, leaving no time for the nation to express its opinion in regard to such a difficult and important question.

From what we have thus briefly stated one may comprehend the perilous condition of Guatemala, when on the night of February 8, 1898, General Reina Barrios was assassinated by Oscar Zollinger, an alien criminal.

In accordance with the Constitution it fell upon Manuel Estrada Cabrera as Vice-President to assume the Presidency of the Republic.

He had returned from Costa Rica only a few days before and intended to withdraw from politics and resume his law practice—in fact he was making preparations to establish his office from which he could go forth with the assurance of winning a competency in the profession in which his talents, prestige and popularity were sure to succeed.

Scarcely had the tragic event taken place, when in the presence of the corpse of the unfortunate President, the members of his cabinet were in consultation seeking means to thwart the Constitution and place in the high office some one selected from their own coterie instead of the one designated by law—in order that they might keep on enjoying the benefits and privileges of power.

The Conservative Party, up to that moment in a state of half slumber, thought this a good opportunity to strike the mortal blow, conquer and crown its ambition to establish its retrograde system, by demolishing with ruthless hand the work of progress inaugurated by General Justo Rufino Barrios and re-establishing the old system of domination over the people by the privileged and aristocratic class and exploitation and servitude of the natives.

It is certain that the Conservative Party has brought ruin, shame and degradation to Spain and all Latin-American Republics, as any one may learn by reading with dispassionate eyes the history of those countries and impartially observing the horrible trail of the party during its long and absolute dominion.

Really, that political faith, well defined by the Chilean publisher, Benjamin Vicuña McKenna, is as terrible as the Colonial System itself of which it is the spectre and the scythe.

The Secretary of War sold himself to the leaders of the Conservative Party to which he belonged; seduced by promises and encouraged by assurances that several officers in active service in the barracks of the capital would co-operate in the criminal plan, he became disloyal, betraying the most precious gem of honor in the eyes of the gallant Guatemalan army, stained his record as a military officer, and gave his allegiance to treason.

Manuel Estrada Cabrera understood perfectly the grave responsibility duty imposed upon him.

Without fear or vacillation, and fortified in his conscience by the sacred obligations devolving upon him before his country and history, he presented himself in the midst of the conspiring members of the cabinet, calmed all turbulence, subdued the revolutionary soldiery, intimidated the ambitious and muffled capitalists through his extraordinary presence of mind and his direct application of the law, restored order with imperturbable energy and re-established the government in peace.

Indeed an extraordinary man this student, lawyer and counsellor, who in the moment of struggle when his own life was at stake, challenged danger and appeared in person before his enemies with head erect and stout heart to perform his duty and maintain the Constitution inviolate, the sacred ark of covenant where the people keep their honor, life and vital interests.

What did he do on this memorable occasion after being recognized legally as the Supreme Chief of the State, in the midst of the enthusiasm of the people and of that Army which professed its adherence to honor and loyalty?

His grand soul, full of noblest sentiments, could find no trace of hate, vengeance or spite against those who had plotted his ruin, political downfall and death.

To forget and to forgive was his only thought: "I am a Guatemalan and my desire is that the first act of my government shall be to pardon those who have done wrong against me personally."

As it happens in all Spanish countries after disturbances of this kind, the general expectation was that the treacherous Secretary of War and his conspiring friends and accomplices would be shot in the public square as an example and warning to others; instead he sent them to their homes and told them not to fear, but that they must respect the law to which he was bound as its most faithful guardian.

An equal act of clemency is not on record in the annals of human history.

We must acknowledge that when Manuel Estrada Cabrera became the chief executive of the nation, he represented more than Legality; he was more than the person designated by the Constitution to rule the destiny of his country; he symbolized something that is felt in the human conscience, something worthy of respect, sympathy and veneration. It is that pure and elevating sentiment which naturally is engendered within us when we admire that which is above the low and paltry things we commonly find in life. Magnanimous heart of a great man whom the Providence of nations selected to do wonderful things to save his country from ruin, devastation and anarchy!

As soon as the country became tranquil again, it became necessary to consult with the people in order to realize his aims for good government, and he hastened to publish a beautiful manifesto offering liberties and guarantees to all.

He announced that all political refugees residing in foreign lands might return to their beloved country and assist in the work of regeneration which he proposed to commence. "We need Peace and Concord," he told them, "to make Guatemala great and happy."

One of his first decrees opened the schools, which as we stated, had been closed in the last days of Reina Barrios' Administration, and ordered the Secretary of Public Instruction to make a rigid investigation and report concerning the competency of the teachers and other conditions relating to the school system in order to obtain the information required to supply what was lacking and improve it.

We have come to an important point in our narrative and cannot leave it without commending Manuel Estrada Cabrera for the interest he has shown in behalf of popular education, which after all is the foundation upon which real progress of nations is based.

If we study philosophically the state of progress or retrogression of a country, says an eminent educator, the efficient cause will be found in the character of the public instruction that former generations impart to their children.

In these fine intellectual institutions the moral development is acquired for the benefit of those who in the future are to guide the welfare of the nation. It is there where are engraved in early age the sentiments that are never forgotten—and those sentiments should be pure and noble, for they make the man a villain or a gentleman.

None of the Latin-American countries has given as much attention to this branch of public administration as Guatemala, since Manuel Estrada Cabrera got into power.

This is the subject in which this great statesman is most interested, because he understands the magnitude and transcendental importance of developing a properly directed and administered system of popular instruction.

And his beneficent purposes have not been limited to primary instruction, but have expanded to the intermediary and higher grades as well, even to the universities, which today are leading centers of education, and so acknowledged by numbers of intelligent foreigners who have visited the country.

His ambition did not rest satisfied with this, for he established practical schools which are greatly admired by North Americans and Europeans who have seen them. It is a work of his exclusive design, of which he ought to be justly proud.

To stimulate teachers and students he instituted the well-known Festivals of Minerva, which are the most sympathetic apotheosis of childhood. He has caused to be constructed a number of edifices in which honor is rendered to the teaching of children. These beautiful manifestations of the people are paid for by the government, which thus reveals an exquisite sensibility for culture; and they have been imitated by two great republics, namely, France in Europe and Argentina in America.

The highways of communication, without which no progress can be made, because they are the arteries through which the blood and life of a nation flows, that is the flow of its productions, commerce and intercourse with other nations of the world, were in February, 1898, in a deplorable state of dilapidation and neglect.

To be sure, General Reina Barrios and his friends of the last days cared for nothing but one thing—to maintain the unpopular government which wanted to remain in power four years longer.

Manuel Estrada Cabrera put aside all low and selfish interests that opposed his plans for the welfare of Guatemala, and with

great energy finished the great task of building the Northern Railroad that connected the Pacific with the Atlantic and which constitutes the real foundation for the greatness and prosperity of the country.

Upon the completion of this extensive and costly line which connects the Capital City with the sea ports on both oceans, he devoted his energies to the construction of other lines and by these means shortened the distances and brought the more important towns into communication with each other, to the advantage and development of industries and commerce.

Likewise, he ordered the reconstruction of roads and highways to make traffic easier between the villages and smaller towns, thus facilitating intercourse between farmers, merchants and travelers.

In a country essentially agricultural in character like Guatemala, the attention of public officials ought to be constantly directed towards the protection of agriculture; in this respect Manuel Estrada Cabrera has used all his energy and care to better this branch of his country's resources, which is the real fountain of the prosperity and happiness of the people.

One of the most praised measures is the one that provides for the adjudication of agricultural lands to persons without means: through the operation of this law many have been saved from misery and the lands have provided sustenance for numberless families, contributing to increased national production.

The cause of the immense accumulation of wealth in the United States is based upon the cession of lands to poor immigrants from Europe, who by their labor have made the wilderness productive and brought forth immense harvests. At the end of the eighteenth century, when she was liberated from Great Britain, her population was less than four millions, while today, according to the last census, she numbers ninety-nine millions.

This fabulous increase is due to the good judgment of its government, which distributed the lands among the most needy classes, attracted the immigration from the old continent, thus building upon the surest of all foundations the marvellous greatness of this admirable country.

Thus, also, this economist with the great forehead, great talents and broad views, understood what was required to govern Guatemala, and to him is due the great advance made in agriculture since 1898 to the present time.

We have now briefly described some of the foremost acts of Manuel Estrada Cabrera, and it necessarily remains to proceed to give an idea as complete as possible of his character as politician, ruler, patriot and philanthropist.

We shall not be diffusive; we shall state the facts plainly and concisely just as they occur, but without neglecting the critical attitude which must accompany any history or attempt at sketching the truth.

We shall remain true to this principle and duty as chroniclers, as we hope we have already shown and also hope to follow to the end.

Owing to the stupid intervention of General Barillas in the affairs of El Salvador, when the two brothers, Carlos and Antonio Ezeta, assaulted and assumed power, Guatemala lost the influence and respect which she had enjoyed in all other Central American States, since each of them constituted a free and independent Republic.

It is sad to have to acknowledge this, but, as we promised, it is our purpose to hold to the truth, and we shall not deviate one iota from our principle.

After making an ineffective protest and ridiculous boast, Barillas dispatched his troops to the frontier, and several weeks after without fighting a single engagement withdrew them, again shamefully causing great displeasure and regret to the entire country and especially to the officers and soldiers of that valiant army that never had laid down arms and always been accustomed to heroism and victory.

Through his blamable behaviour the foolhardy President brought upon himself the ill will of the majority of his fellow citizens, and having by his blunders in the Salvadorean campaign reduced the prestige and sense of honor of the Guatemalan soldier, he became worse than unpopular, even considered low and contemptible.

It was impossible from any point of view that after such failure he could even think of being re-elected after his term in office expired, and though of scanty intelligence, he understood the situation and that he ought to retire to private life and never again seek to become a factor in the public affairs of his country.

During his six years of administration Reina Barrios observed the strictest neutrality with the border states, El Salvador

and Honduras, which by reason thereof unjustly imputed this studied retirement to be due to fear, which, of course, increased their scornful opinion of Guatemala; and from these circumstances arose those false conclusions and thoughts which interfere with the natural considerations upon which must be founded guaranties of continued existence and the preservation of honorable and permanent peace.

Manuel Estrada Cabrera was determined to maintain peace without humiliation. Let us enjoy that precious gift for the people, he said to Guatemala, but I shall demand it frankly and with dignity.

Wherefore, he made it clearly understood to all neighboring countries that he maintained such cordial relations as ought to exist among sister republics. This was his great desire, as he by nature is of a peaceful disposition, loves peace and order in his own as well as in other countries.

But, though desirable, it was impossible to preserve peace, because El Salvador, encouraged by the weakness and inactivity of the preceding administrations of Barillas and Reina Barrios, continued systematically its former acts of provocation; accordingly it became necessary to take precautions for the maintenance of national interests and honor which had been confided to his care by the nation.

Soon he found himself obliged to accept the challenge sent to Guatemala and took steps to repel the outrage by armed force.

In a few days the Guatemalan army was able to demonstrate its strength, indomitable valor and fine discipline by defeating the insolent invading army which had to flee, leaving behind it to the victors their banners, cannon, and even the corpse of the leader who had provoked the conflict.

After this memorable campaign in which the Guatemelan soldier heroically vindicated his good name by demonstrating his superiority, all the remaining Central American countries entered into relations of mutual respect and friendship so generously offered them by the victor.

Manuel Estrada Cabrera, though only a civilian and diplomat by temperament and education, has a very wide and profound knowledge of military law; having studied deeply the history of humanity and its many wars, he was able to direct with skill the military operations of the Salvadorean campaign, placing the army under the command of competent generals who executed faithfully the orders of the chief executive of the state.

For many years Guatemala endured the abusive behaviour of Mexico, her Northern neighbor, who imagined that all she had to do was to command and that it was the duty of Guatemala to obey without murmur or delay.

It was really a scandal to observe the humiliations that time and again were imposed by Mexico upon a nation of the pride and dignity of Guatemala.

This increasing arrogance, we repeat, took the form of a sort of tutelage, to which former administrations had submitted and under which they acceded to every demand from Mexico through fear of conflict with this larger neighboring state. But such conditions were impossible to be endured by such high-minded and strenuous a character as Manuel Estrada Cabrera, who combining energy with great gifts as statesman, soon was able to put an end to this intolerable domination and established a new, stable and respected administration of the international relations with Mexico, thereby restoring mutual confidence and friendship between these neighbors.

Before mentioning a very delicate matter, we offer a few words of explanation.

However much we should desire to avoid any allusion to the subject, we are compelled to deal with it by reason of our high duty as historians to search out all facts of our day for the benefit of future generations and to dispel and overthrow the many falsehoods and calumnies which are engendered through envy and malice; wherefore, we proceed with firmness and ardor in our endeavor to relate the true facts.

To prove our veracity as faithful reporters, we may mention that we are foreigners and consequently entirely impartial and unconcerned in Central American affairs.

We were born in Scotland and left our beloved mother country in order to visit the American continent, through which we have traveled extensively. We had no intention of relating our impressions of travel, but as we have entered upon the task, we must remind our readers what we told them in the very beginning of this pamphlet, we do it from motives of justice and for the sake of truth.

Manuel Estrada Cabrera devoted from the beginning of his government all his energies to the solution of the difficult and

complicated political problems that affected Guatemala; and thanks to his labor and efforts in this behalf, he secured and established peace and orderly conditions in place of the insecurity and anxieties that prevailed in the country during former administrations.

To find the means to effect his purposes with infinite tact and wonderful skill—this was the giant task he carried out during the eighteen years that brought about such magnificent results.

In surveying the condition of Latin-American countries, from the Rio Grande to the Strait of Magellan, we find that those who have reached the highest degree of advancement are those that devote themselves to labor and enjoy the peace that a stable and effective government offers and guarantees.

Without such benevolent influence, the only support of free institutions under the protection of which are developed all material advantages, like the arts, sciences and public education, and everything that constitutes that wonderful chain which we call Civilization, there is nothing, nor could there be anything, in a community to attract the attention and respect of other countries.

This is the particular thing to which we are driven to refer and which was regarded with lamentable indifference before Manuel Estrada Cabrera took charge of the executive power of the republic.

Politics, rightly defined, is the Science of governing the people correctly; investigating their condition for the purpose of improvement, studying their customs in order to guide them wisely according to their inclinations, probing their necessities in order to assist them in every way possible, considering their tendencies in order to aid them practically and with a view to achieve a wise realization of their aims.

With great experience in the management of public affairs and keen and constant attention, he got acquainted with all the conditions and proceeded to better them, issuing directly and as soon as required the proper orders necessary to accomplish the general good.

Well learned in the customs and usages of his people, with perfect understanding of their aptitudes and desires, and under the most democratic system, he took proper steps to rule them with just and sound principles of law.

As a true and enlightened statesman he provided for the needs of all classes in society that required immediate help, and spared no effort to relieve them according to the means at hand.

Imbued with the same desires and aims as his people for whom he thought and labored incessantly, sacrificing his own ease, personal comfort and health, he led them onward upon the path of permanent peace toward the highest ideals of order, liberty and justice.

This in epitome is the work of Manuel Estrada Cabrera, whereby such brilliant results have been achieved for Guatemala today and upon which firm and vast foundation its future prosperity and progress rests.

In a few words we may give an account of the actual economic condition of Guatemala.

The grave financial complications of the United States and Europe, which countries provide the markets for the products and the mart for the financial transactions of Latin American countries, have caused a great depression in their monetary systems.

To this cause is due principally the unsettled condition of the financial affairs of these countries during the last twenty years, not only in Central America, but in the Southern continent as well.

To remove false impressions we must illustrate this point.

The Republic of Colombia has experienced the greatest difficulties in regard to her financial transactions, unless it be Mexico, ever since that country became constantly involved in disorder through the terrible internal struggle still going on.

Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Cuba and Santo Domingo, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador suffer more or less the terrible consequences of this crisis, aggravated in some of the countries through the annual increase in interest on the enormous foreign debts.

Guatemala could not escape becoming likewise involved, wherefore the effects of this crisis were felt also there.

Upon his ascension to power in 1898, Manuel Estrada Cabrera encountered a very difficult financial situation, which he ameliorated in the best way possible, aided by the great resources of the country and through his own ability and honesty.

By amortizing and paying all foreign interest charges punctually this debt has been reduced to insignificant proportions as compared with the immense production of this prosperous country—one of the richest and most beautiful on the American continent.

By reason of this fact it is easy to understand why now the credit of Guatemala is so well established both in Europe and in the United States.

As due to the meritorious endeavors of Manuel Estrada Cabrera all the political problems of Guatemala were solved satisfactorily, so were also its economical difficulties lessened and improved in a manner to indicate the permanent adjustment in the near future of this great problem which now affects every nation in the world.

Through the facts we have briefly related, the reader will easily grasp the magnitude of the undertakings prosecuted by the illustrious statesman we herein honor.

To him may well and appropriately be applied what Castelar said of Gambetta at the end of the Franco-Prussian War in 1870: "He saved his country from ruin like the Savior saved Lazarus from death."

We repeat again, it would be too great a task, indeed impossible, to describe in detail every act performed by Manuel Estrada Cabrera's administration in behalf of Guatemala and through which it has risen to the high state of development it now enjoys.

Such an undertaking would fill a big volume and would require more time than is at our disposal.

Notwithstanding, however, that we must be brief in our appreciation of his record, it is necessary herein to concisely describe the principal measures that have advanced Guatemala during the last eighteen years.

As already related, we know that during Reina Barrios' administration in which Manuel Estrada Cabrera held the post of Secretary of the Interior and Justice, the latter modified the judicial system and introduced a great many reforms in keeping with his skill as an attorney and his valuable experience as a jurisconsult.

Subsequently during the years he occupied the presidency of the republic, he pursued with commendable zeal and energy this work and succeeded admirably in that he insisted that in every court, justice should be meted out impartially, and to that end

appointed honest and competent court officials to administer the law.

Likewise, while referring to the Salvadorean campaign, we have mentioned the endeavors made by Manuel Estrada Cabrera to reform the army, which today is under the most excellent discipline and its organization so perfect that whenever required it may be mobilized in a few days and put into the field ready to defend the national cause, to the number of over one hundred thousand men, composing cavalry, artillery and infantry and commanded by brave and able officers.

We have knowledge of the armies of most of the Spanish American republics and we have formed the opinion, confirmed by English, French and German military experts, that the best drilled and best organized are those of Chile, Argentina and Guatemala.

There is not a single measure for the improvement and benefit of the country that was not due to the efforts of the Liberal Party which triumphantly came into power in 1871, because the Conservative Party as represented by the administrations of Rafael Carrera and Vicente Cerna was unalterably opposed to any kind of reform or advanced step.

The telegraph was first introduced into Guatemala in 1867 by a Frenchman, Oscar du Teil, and the Guatemalans Salvador Cobos and Juan Francisco Alvarez, who established a line between the capital and the City of Amatitlán; but this undertaking failed immediately as it received no support from the government which at that time maintained an indifferent or antagonistic attitude toward this wonderful invention, which was considered all but a new means of witchcraft.

It was during Justo Rufino Barrios' administration that a regular telegraph system was installed, and improvements have been made to it since, especially after 1898, when Manuel Estrada Cabrera decided to extend the lines to the cities and towns of the republic and build suitable buildings for the purpose, thereby securing the present complete and perfect telegraphic service.

In the month of February, 1899, the school of telegraphy was established in the capital with the object of furnishing the offices with competent operators who have materially assisted in perfecting the service.

Special attention has been given to the legislative requirements of this branch and a telegraphic code adopted which has produced excellent results; besides, steps have been taken to extend and further improve the organization of the system.

At the end of September, 1881, telephones came into use in Guatemala. When President Reina Barrios died, there were 125 telephones in the capital and forty-six in the departments. A few months after the commencement of the administration of Manuel Estrada Cabrera the number had increased to 390, located in all parts of the country, and today they have trebled in number and the instruments compare well with the latest and best patents used in the United States.

The Postoffice Department is well organized since 1871, and it has been improved during the succeeding years until 1898, when the government decided that it should be equal to that of any modern country.

In fact at the present time it is subject to the international conventions and regulations which were accepted and ratified by Guatemala at the Universal Postal Union in Switzerland, and in that connection we publish the following from a recently published pamphlet: "To facilitate postal communication and increase the speed of the service; to improve the means of transmission; to protect the public in the use of the mails, by means of constant supervision and observation of the laws, orders and regulations; to induce the employees to faithfully observe the rules, particularly in regard to preserving the inviolability of the mail; to improve the service by instructing the postmasters of the republic; to provide the offices with the required facilities to supply local needs; to enlarge the postal lines; to increase the number of mail boxes, and establish delivery routes in every town for local convenience; to adopt measures of economy and for the betterment of the service, so as to expedite in every way possible this international branch of public service; this has been the great aim and work performed in Guatemala since the happy day that Manuel Estrada Cabrera assumed the presidency of the republic."

As we referred to the war with El Salvador, which Guatemala was compelled to prosecute in order to defend her honor, we men-

tioned that Manuel Estrada Cabrera is a devout adherent of peace, not only by reason of his natural disposition and education, but also by reason of his intellectual qualification in comprehending that it is absolutely essential to preserve peace, if he would succeed in developing the wealth and natural resources of the country and make the people happy and prosperous.

Wars are also equally justified, for example, when the Northern States raised the great army to crush the confederates who sought to divide the American Union in order to maintain the infamous slave traffic; when the colonies on this continent under courageous leaders like Washington, Bolívar, San Martín and Carlos Manuel de Céspedes raised the standard of rebellion and heroically fought for liberty and independence; and finally when Justo Rufino Barrios in the name of modern civilization and at the head of the Liberal Party in 1871 made an end of the old and retrograde party which had so long lorded over Guatemala.

Those were struggles that have seared men's souls in order to save and redeem principles for which humanity marches forward, crushing all errors and sins of the past.

As we justify wars for humane purposes, we condemn other wars and revolutions which have had no other aim than to satisfy ignoble lust for power or gold, wars that brought ruin and loss of prestige to the countries that conducted them.

How sad to see Mexico in perpetual convulsion, its sons killing each other and destroying the future of their country, without being able to point to a single honorable or patriotic principle to justify the terrible slaughter.

In the same manner we see other republics of Spanish origin often deliver themselves to indiscriminate cutting of throats; and this spectacle is common in all countries where criminal leaders are permitted in this way to satisfy their ambitions to acquire power for the sake of becoming wealthy.

Guatemala is one of the few exceptions in the roll of those unfortunate countries. Like Costa Rica, Chile and Argentina, she enjoys permanent peace and good order, because Manuel Estrada Cabrera has given her a government that guarantees all rights and liberties, protects liberally agriculture, industry and commerce, fosters the accummulation of wealth, and improves the condition of the working people, who are satisfied with their way of living and therefore remain deaf to all promises of political leaders, who, without a trace of principles, only endeavor to deceive them, in their desire to gain ignoble ends by means of disturbances and revolution.

As previously stated, Manuel Estrada Cabrera took office as President of the republic upon the death of Reina Barrios in conformity with the Constitution of the State.

Although he did not aspire to occupy the high office cast upon him by patriotic duty, it would have been a serious breach of civic virtue on his part to have withdrawn and like a coward permit himself to be eliminated and thereby give opportunity to cunning politicians to consummate the crime, thus turning the law into a farce to satisfy their personal ambitions and selfish interests.

To have acted in such a manner would have subjected him to the censure of his fellow citizens, who would have had the undoubted right to take him to task for his conduct as a public servant, and his name in history would have been branded with scorn and shame.

But he was not the type of man who forgetting all sense of honor and self respect would have thus disgraced himself and run away like a hunted deer, as perhaps some people imagined he would do.

On the contrary, his proud character and soul imbued with purest patriotism defied all danger, as his long and honorable public life has proven and demonstrated beyond suspicion.

Guatemalans and the entire world know full well that, in the discharge of duties imposed upon him, his heart retained its imperturbable calm in the midst of shot and shell, as more than once happened during foul plots to assassinate him and from which he saved his life only through his great courage and cool-headedness.

It was his desire to retire to private life after ending his provisional term, when he intended to attend to his personal affairs and assist with his experience and ability the newly elected government, and to that end he set a day for the election which was held through all parts of the republic under conditions of utmost freedom.

His numerous friends and admirers, however, did not acquiesce in his purposes, as they were of the opinion that his work was only begun and should be continued, wherefore they cast their votes for him and thus elected him President of the republic for his first term of six years, in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution, and as soon as this term expired he was again returned to office by an immense majority, so that under his wise

direction the country has been permitted uninterruptedly to reach its present high state of proficiency.

These elections, carried almost unanimously among the enthusiastic voters who understand the extraordinary merits of this great statesman and leader, to whom they entrust implicitly the destiny of their country, disclose the good judgment of the citizens of Guatemala, who through the experience already acquired by past misfortunes, are justified in their fear that the affairs of the nation might fall into hands of men without knowledge and experience.

This unlimited confidence reposed in him demonstrates the gratitude of his fellow citizens, who in thus doing him justice, compel him also to yield to the will of the people and continue in that high office performing his services in behalf of further progress.

At this very time when he insists upon his purpose to retire definitely and rest from his labors upon the conclusion of his present term, the Guatemalans unitedly protest against such a step and are planning at the next election again to make him their choice as the only man possessing the sympathy, respect and love of his fellow citizens.

Reviewing impartially the facts stated in the preceding paragraphs and considering what we shall say in those that follow, the reader may judge the noble superiority of the great patriot Manuel Estrada Cabrera and will understand the reasons and motives that prompt the people of Guatemala in expressing their determination and hope of re-electing him for the next presidential term.

He is of an exceedingly modest character, of plain habits, and his entire life is spent in the performance of his duties and his studies, which together constitute his daily work.

He is so regular that there are no exceptions in his daily routine; each day is a working day and not one is devoted to rest.

His strong physical constitution has failed him once in a while from overwork, but fortunately each illness has been of short duration, owing to the good care he has always taken of his bodily health.

He rises early and keeps busy at work until very late at night, attending to the grave and important matters of state, without any sign of fatigue until compelled by exhaustion to seek a few hours' rest.

Never—not even in youth—was he addicted to pleasures and enjoyments so common to that period in life. It seems he had a presentiment of the heavy and great responsibility destiny had prepared for him—as he was always serious and circumspect—from childhood through all the succeeding years, all devoted as before stated to the welfare of the nation.

Frank and with a fine education, he possesses the skill and power to attract the good will and confidence of all persons who come into personal contact with him, thereby constantly increasing the number of his friends.

Well informed through study, meditation and experience, he is admirable in his conversations. The thoughts and expressions coming from his lips charm every person having the fortune to hear him. American and European diplomats who have known him intimately acknowledge the impossibility of evading the subtle influence of Manuel Estrada Cabrera's conversation; his easy and elegant discourse becomes eloquence in dealing with grave and complicated social, political and economic questions.

Even his countenance portrays something attractive and potent that reveals the mind of the master. In his appearance one distinguishes the man of eminence. We have often heard of his charming manner and attractive personal bearing concerning which we may corroborate the following statement; in fact, as we stood before him, we formed the impression that we stood in the presence of a great personality—that of a renowned chief, a political and administrative genius.

It would seem, judging from all the well known facts, as hitherto stated, Manuel Estrada Cabrera should not have had a single enemy, as he at all times had been inspired by high ideals and intentions in promoting the prosperity and legitimate interests of Guatemala.

Such supposition, however, would be erroneous, for history demonstrates that those who have made the greatest sacrifices for their country, and however much they may have earned the gratitude of the majority of their contemporaries, nevertheless through their acts engender the envy if not hate of those who listen only to their lower passions and the instincts of their personal ambition.

George Washington, who is the symbol of disinterestedness

and patriotism in its most noble form, suffered insults from his adversaries; Abraham Lincoln, the martyred redeemer, was the victim of severe and harsh criticism by his enemies; Bolívar, the liberator of five countries, was denigrated by the very men who owed to his sword their right of being called free; in truth the history of the world demonstrates the impossibility of citing a single instance when a great man and benefactor was not exposed to the cabal and ill-will of small and wicked minds.

And this fact is due to the inevitable result of a great boon bestowed upon the majority that a few must suffer diminution of their particular interests; that no community lacks ambitious individuals who view with the hatred of a hyena the altitude reached by others superior to themselves; consequently the envy of these wretches boils and flows over without check when contemplating how high capacity and merit rises above impotent mediocrity and disgraceful cowardice.

Unhappy law of human nature which is verified in every country and clime, and it rules in Guatemala like in every other part of the world.

The unwarranted enemies of Manuel Estrada Cabrera have only one weapon against him, and they use this constantly and vehemently—this instrument is calumny and slander.

There is not a single act in his private or public life that his opponents have not traduced; in their rage they have not spared even the most sacred sentiments and relations of life, those of a son, a father and a husband.

Any one visiting the country even for the shortest period is convinced that there exists the most complete freedom in Guatemala, such as never existed before.

The press which had been subjected to restraint and severe censorship is not hindered in any way since his government came into power; consequently writers are able to express their views without fear of being molested or prosecuted. And owing to this condition, there are more printing offices and double the number of newspapers than existed under the previous administration.

Although this fact is fully known, his opponents, in their efforts to injure his reputation among foreigners, have published articles in Spanish and English stating all kinds of falsehoods and representing him as an arrogant dictator who does not tolerate the least criticism.

We have observed this ruler capable of governing a great nation worthily and with distinction, through his great capacity;

but to repeat once more, those who hate him from motives of personal interest, ambition, enmity or hate engendered by envy, and who are powerless to harm him in any other way, those are the persons who heap insults and calumnies against him, using these low methods thereby misleading the unwary and ignorant and making them believe that Manuel Estrada Cabrera is not the wise ruler, the clement and generous character, as he is universally acknowledged to be by all who have written concerning his public and private life.

Regarding the absurdities which his enemies publish the whole country laughs and finds them very amusing. Of course such things when mentioned in newspapers and at the clubs evoke only reflections upon their authors, who are the only ones injured and who constitute a group of voluntary exiles sworn not to return to Guatemala until they may occupy the most important positions at present denied them by their fellow citizens.

Unfortunately, there are many persons in other Central and South American States, as well as in the United States and Europe, who give credit to these false statements to be found in venal pamphlets and newspapers—these persons take no trouble to investigate the facts or ascertain for themselves the truth or falsity of what they read or hear.

In taking up the pen to describe present conditions of Guatemala, its form of government and the character of its chief executive, our only purpose is to describe and make known the history of that republic during the last eighteen years.

We had no desire to portray the paltry methods of those who in their obsession cannot weigh evidence or understand real facts. But it was impossible entirely to overlook them in our endeavors to fulfill our mission as faithful historians, wherefore we are compelled to expose their nefarious intention of blackening the character of one of the most prominent figures in human history.

Manuel Estrada Cabrera, as is generally known, is the son of a most excellent woman, who with her mother's love inculcated in the heart of her child the most tender and noble sentiments, which glorified his character and shed lustre over his private and public life.

To his mother Joaquina Cabrera de Estrada it was supreme satisfaction to think and to do good.

To aid the unfortunate by her own hand in her own honored home was the happiest event in her life.

So well did the needy know this her trait that they came there for assistance and relief and obtained such without fail.

She was indeed a noble hearted woman, humble in her saintly grandeur, never being vain or proud because of the honors and positions heaped upon her son.

It was she who conceived the idea which brought about the construction of the "Maternity Asylum" over the entrance of which her son inscribed the name of his beloved mother "Joaquina" in lasting remembrance by all good hearted people.

Opposite and a short distance from said building the President built a hospital for convalescents named "Estrada Cabrera."

Both are two grand institutions of benevolence that symbolize the sentiments of the mother transmitted to the son, charity in its purest and noblest form.

With great zeal has the President bestowed his attention upon the work of assisting the poor, having spent large sums for the purpose out of his own means.

His private charitable deeds are numberless and spread over the entire country as well as the capital.

And even to foreign countries, when help has been asked, has he rendered assistance to relieve distress and misfortune, and in all charitable undertakings his generosity has been proverbial as we could prove by many instances coming to our knowledge.

We have now briefly described the public life of Manuel Estrada Cabrera.

We have not permitted our pen to be solely guided by the admiration we entertain for this great man, as we have taken particular care to state the facts plainly to enable the reader to form his own opinion and exercise his judgment impartially.

We have even gone further by omitting a good many favorable circumstances, in order to make the truth known to all and to avoid the appearance of having exaggerated as might be supposed by those who do not know the country, its people and history.

But imitating Plutarch in his "Lives," wherein he illustrates the great men of ancient times, we portray in this little compendium, in logical sequence, a great historical figure, Manuel Estrada Cabrera, in his character of ruler, leader, statesman and patriot.

His great deeds have placed him prominently in the History of Humanity, entitling him to the respect and admiration of the present and future generations!

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